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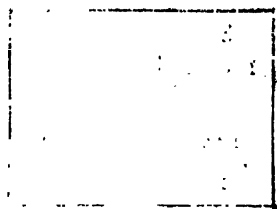
El Dorado "29"

1. Poetry, American

NBI

Maule

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*"Three pans of dirt that glittered so my heart was in my mouth
As I squatted down to wash 'em on the shore." (See page 41.)*

EL DORADO

"29"



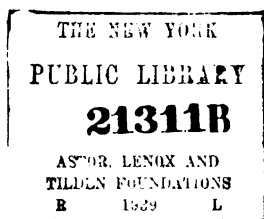
Along with
other
Weird
**Alaskan
Tales**

Done into Verse
— by —
Francis I. Maule^{oc}

The John C. Winston Co.
Philadelphia, Pa.

[1910]

M. S. M.



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FRANCIS I. MAULE

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W O R 19 FEB '36

El Dorado "29"

*The signal ~~gong~~ is clanging and the cage is at the
top;*

*And a crowd of night-shift workers outward
pour,*

*In their mud-stained suits of khaki, and their
soaked and ~~sodden~~ shoes,*

*From the levels, where they blast the precious
ore.*

*Lagging back behind his fellows as they scatter
forth like ants,*

*To reach their sun-bleached shanties on the rise,
Stood a sturdy Swedish miner, scraping tallow
from his jeans,*

*With the hopeless look of "has-been" in his
eyes.*

*With halting steps the miner faint had passed me
by unheeded,
But a sudden sort of premonition came,
And with instant recognition, as it were by intuition,
He paused, I turned, our eyes met, and I called
him by his name.*

*"Are you he, and say they truly was it you who
wove the spell,
That spread a golden frenzy o'er the land?
And was yours the fatal winning that drove
thousands into sinning,
And with pan, and pick, and shovel, pointed
multitudes to hell?*

*"From his pulpit drove the preacher, snatched his
ferule from the teacher,
Into exile sent the worker of the forge, the
plow and loom,
Gathered up from all creation men of every
tongue and nation,
Sent alike the vile and noble to the Klondike,
and to doom.*

*Shackle-free set acquisition, dragged the feeble
to perdition,
Slipped the ever slender leash that curbs desire,
Did your questing pick's upturning set those bale-
ful longings burning,
That with greed for gold unholy, fed an all-con-
suming fire ?*

*"To the winds gave prudence, reason, and the salt
that virtues season
Had forever lost its savor, and was trampled
in the dust,
'Neath the feet of maddened masses, as they
throng the trails and passes,
Driven onward in a frenzy, by the lashings of
their lust."*

*When I paused he turned upon me, eyes of such
supernal sadness,
That their pupils seemed engraven with the
image of despair.
And he said in gentle accents, with a pleasant
Norse inflection,
I'll tell you all about it, if you have the time
to spare.*

A lot of us old "Sour-Doughs," eight or nine or
mebby ten,
Had been up the K'ondike north of "sixty-
four"



"A lot of us old 'Sour-Doughs' "

And we'd done a heap of tramping, washed a
mountain range or two
To pan out the barest living—nothing more.

It was really tantalizing the way things kept
a-sizing,
And often it was "All pull out and quit."

Then some chap would strike a nugget or a pan
of "extra color,"

And again all hands would hustle for a bit.

I myself had hung right to it and I knew just
how to do it,

For there never was a "Shaker" in that bunch
That could whirl a pan of gravel, and from its grit
unravel,

More color than the Swede my pards called
"Hunch."

Why "Hunch?" Oh! that is easy; I'd a fall
when quite a boy

And it makes me stoop and walk a leetle lame.
My schoolmates tacked it to me, and wherever I
have been,

I am follered like my shadow by that name.

As near as I remember it was some time in Novem-
ber

When I was me for Dawson town and all the
rest,

With a poke of dust tucked under, what for sure
was (and no wonder),

A most uncommon greasy deer-hide vest.



"'Twas me for Dawson town"

Then I hit it up for Skagway while my poke
could stand alone

By reason of eight hundred good, still left.

And I figured on a racket just so long as that
same packet

Could hold on—to,—well! the smallest bit of
heft.

Met some boys and things got going, kept on
going—going faster,
Till I seemed to hear the whole town in a roar.
Then a lapse I could not measure, one I did not
highly treasure,
When awaking to the freedom of a dirty bar-
room floor.

'Round my neck I felt the drawing of a well
remembered thong,
But from it hung the emptiest of pokes,
While my deer-skin jacket pocket was just
bulging with a paper,
With its record of my costliest of jokes.

That paper, how I studied it a dozen times or
more,
Its signature most certainly was mine,
Was a deed that made me owner of a worthless
Klondike claim—
"El Dorado," and its number, "Twenty-nine."

In vain I sought the shysters who had queered
me in the deal.
To a man they swore the offer came from me,

Was I goin' to do the baby-act, lay down on
them and squeal?

Said I'd give eight hundred for the property,
in fee.

There I was right up agin it, with just two
things left to do,

For those skimmers hadn't left me with a cent,
Stay and slave or starve in Skagway, hit it up
for "twenty-nine,"

It was rotten foolish going, but I went!

Yes, I sure was up agin it, but I soon caught
up my nerve,

For the friends I had in "Skag" they couldn't
steal.

There was lots of boys as knew me square
and the best of all the bunch

Was a grey old "Forty-niner"—Jim McNeal.

Jim had been there from the bottom to the
tip most of the top.

He'd been bitten by the Californy craze,
He'd struck it rich and often, lost it all a
dozen times,

But you couldn't jolt Jim's faith in better days.

Jim ran a hardware-tavern, peddled "red-eye,"
pans and picks,
And on the side sold shovels, gin and beer.
He was always very friendly, but his real and
truly size
I never knowed till I was to the queer.



"'Twas a slim and scattered bunch of houses then"

I was feelin' mighty wretched when I stepped
into his j'int,
On the sign 'twas called "The Little Yukon
Shack,"
And I found Jim mighty busy, but I caught his
friendly nod and
"I want to see you, special, Hunch, come back."

Then I wandered (legs and mind too) up and
down the streets of "Skag,"

'Twas a slim and scattered bunch of houses
then.

And I strolled down to the landin' where the
beach was choked with stuff

And I learn't some brand-new cussin' from
the men.

When I thought his rush was over I hiked back
up to Jim's.

I remember he was chalkin' on a slate.

He says, "Set down a minute; take that cheer
behind the stove, Hunch,

I reckon we'll be talkin' purty late.

~~"Them boys that sold you 'twenty-nine' was
in here quite a spell.~~

~~They was full of rum and brimmin' full of jokes;
Why I never heerd such yell'n' while the
drunkest one was tellin'~~

~~How they'd dumped old El Dorado for your
fortune in their pokes.~~

"They said you was clean-busted, for they'd
taken every cent,

But you'd some day be a bloomin' millionaire,
When you'd done some little travel, washed
a few square miles of gravel

And hed found the fist-big nuggets that
was there."

Then McNeal pulled down the curtain, seen the
door was locked for certain

And blew out a pair of extry stinkin' lamps;
Then he hitched his chair up near me and he
said—how it did cheer me—

"Hunch, I'll stake you to get even with them
scamps.

"Of course, I don't know nothing 'bout this 'El
Dorady' claim,

But I'd bet my bottom dollar, and some more,
That the man who will stick to it, will for certain
never rue it,

If he hits the Yukon north of 'sixty-four.'

"Yes, Hunch, I'm for the gamble and I'll rig
you for the ramble

With any sort of grub-stake that you like,
For you've got the sand to travel and the Yukon's
got the gravel
That's just waitin' for the down-all-others
strike."

In the dark we talked it over, how I'd tackle
"Twenty-nine,"
And as both of us was "Sour-doughs," Jim and
me,
We figured up an outfit, grub and tools and mule
and cash,
And we didn't have no trouble to agree.

This was on a Friday evening back in August,
'97,
And on Monday, just a leetle after dawn,
"Uncle Peter" wore my duffle, grub and pick,
and pan and shovel,
And I petered out of Skagway, and was
gone.

Oh yes! Why "Uncle Peter"—worth a mint was
that same creetur—

Was a mule that cost McNeal a thousand
bits,
He was tough, (I'd liked him bigger,) he was
jest my age I figger,
And was subject to some quite amusin' fits.

Him and me was always friendly, he was gentle
as a lamb,
And I never see his match on any trail,
But he hated dogs and Injuns, and to folks
he didn't like
He was apt to signal danger with his tail.

Them as knowed him mostly always, when I led
him out to cinch,
And was heavin' hard to gather up the slack,
Fought shy of Pete's back-bildin's, for he
had a sudden way
That discouraged folks from ever comin' back.

Here was "Hunch" once more a trailin' with his
nose a-pointin' north
With sure four, most like five hundred miles
to do.

'Twas a three or four months' gamble, full of
hustle, hump and scramble
Ere the stakes of El Dorado came in view.

Well, I took Pete by the bridle and we headed for
the pass,
And again I hear that well-remembered click
When the pans and shovels rattle, from the
jolting of the cattle,
And the axe hits up the chorus with the pick.

For weeks 'twas easy goin', summer time, three
months from snowin',
 grub was fresh and plenty, trails was extry
good,
And how Pete and me did hustle, up past Ben-
nett (soon to bustle),
We was pushin' for the Klondike to make
good.

How well I can remember that pepper-hot Sep-
tember
As we swung around Lake Bennett by the pass.

Yukon skies were never bluer, you could tell
each peak for sure.

Most could count the spruces on 'em in those
thirty miles of glass.

Day by day we hung right to it—both of us
knew how to do it,

Prospectin' surely suited him and me,
So we plodded on together, we was birds of the
same feather

And as friendly as a man and mule could be.

Clear nights, I'd water Peter, hobble him and
turn him loose,

Eat my supper, then roll up beside a log.
And that mule filled up with grasses, good and
plenty in the passes,
Would lay down close up agin me like a dog.

Stormy nights I'd cut down cedars with extra
bushy tops

And lean them up agin a shelving bank,
Build a fire and crawl in under, and I'd sleep
as dry as bone
Though the rain came down to beat a busted tank.

Safe we ran the White Horse Rapids—how they
thundered through the gorge,
They was certain death for any but the cool,
And right here it might be stated, I was some-
what over-freighted
With nine hundred-weight of agitated mule.

I whip-sawed out the lumber, built an extry big
battoe,
For I had a heap of duffle, thanks to Jim.
Built her wide so's not to teeter, when I shipped
poor Uncle Peter,
For I knewed that White Horse run would
worry him.

When I shoved her in the water, she didn't leak
a drop,
So I soon was busy packin' of my stuff,
But to figure out a passage for a mule too live
for "sassage,"
Ain't so altogether easy, sure enough.

I led him to the water, at the boat he sorta
glanced,
Then he gev his starboard ear a gentle wave,

And his eye-whites turned to yellor, same as
when he'd reached some feller
With a heel-in' power to stake him for his
grave.



"I whisp-sawed out the lumber"

I had a heap of trouble bendin' Uncle Peter double,
How I wisht he'd had an extry set of knees,
But two half-breeds helped me throw him,
lash his legs and safely stow him,
Then he lay among the duffle at his ease.

I hired them men to help me, both was good with
pole or paddle,
While I stood aft a-steerin' with an oar,
So we drifted through an eddy, straightened out,
got good and ready;
Lord-a mercy! how that cañon sure did roar.

In less than half a minnit we was to the gorge,
then in it,
In its awful roar, its gurgle, whirl and foam.
Gee! them Injuns' eyes was rollin', but they did
some mighty polin';
Mebby thinkin' of two yaller gals at home?

Safe we rode that raging torrent, with its half-
sunk jagged rocks,
That later wrecked Cheechakos* by the score.
Slid across the wide, quick water, and it didn't
seem like no time
'Till we'd built a fire to dry ourselves ashore.

Paid them half-breeds, well they'd earned it, in
the boat they'd sure been white,

*Newcomer, Tenderfoot, in Siwash Indian lingo.



"Across the wide, quick water"

Loosed the mule and set my tent up, did some
washin' and some mendin'
And we stopped just where we landed for the
night.

Next morning bright and early—'bout the tent?
Why yes, I had one.
Two little sheets of canvas, nothing more;
They was buttoned up together and they'd shed
a heap of weather,
Father slept in it all through the Civil War.

For grub? well, sour-dough biskits, mostly always
beans and bacon,
But I often used to piece them victuals out
When twenty minnits' fishin' would make the
nice addition
Of a grayling, or a mess of speckled trout.

Then I had an old-style Navy, 'twas a Colt,
size 44,
It for sure was sorta heavy, but it shot.
It would drop a doe at eighty, snip a grouse's
head at twenty—
Well it brought all sorts of varmints to the pot.

Once, high up on Saw Mountain, by the edge
of a ravine,
Where some new-fell snow had freshened up the
old,
I came sudden on a Big-horn standin' out agin
the sky
When the settin' sun had turned his head to gold.

He stood like he was frozen there agin a sea of
blue,

Never dreamin' that an enemy was near.
While I crept up mighty gentle, why I sorta held
my breath,
For them sheep is always skeeryer than deer.



"By the edge of a ravine"

When I stopped behind a boulder with no footing
further on,
We was all of twenty rods or more apart.
But I rested that old "Navy" on the edge of the
big stone,
And I put its half-ounce bullet through his
heart.

He fell into the cañon, bounding down from
ledge to ledge,
Till he landed in a tree-top far below.
We was mighty glad to get him and the bunch
of us soon et him,
For there's no wild meat like Big-horn, don't
you know.

I remember one December, in my blankets, sound
asleep,
The fire was low, the night as black as tar,
When I heerd a fearful screamin', to my just
up-wakened seemin'
It sounded 'bout ten feet off—if so far.

I sot up mighty sudden, whipped that Navy
from its sheath,
For I see two green eyes lookin' into mine.
Just across the smould'ring ashes, there he stood
with tail a-wavin'
And I heerd the sneakin' critter sorta whine

'Twas a panther—some says "lion,"—he's a mean
and sneakin' beast,

What'll run away from anyone on sight,
But he sure does awful screechin', apt to
mighty skeer Cheechakos
When he starts them caterwaulings in the
night.

It mought have been a second, but for sure
it wasn't more,
Till I drewed the little bead between his eyes.
Then old 44 just thundered, then a yell—"Hunch"
hadn't blundered,
For he tanned a pelt of more than common
size.

I hev shot with that ree-volver, I guess every-
thing there is,
From a chipmunk to a silver-tip, or moose,
But I never shot a human, only p'inted it at one,
And for killin' folks, it's never had no use.

Where was I? Well, next morning Pete and me
hit up the trail,
And I noticed when a-makin' up the pack,

That the mule had some hard feelin's, and to
judge him by his squealin's,
He was soured on that boat-ride, on his back.

Day by day, due north by compass, rain, or
shine, or hot or cold,
The pair of us stuck steady to the trail,
Makin' time on all good goin', waded streams
or crossed them swimmin',
Me assisted by a handy yaller-tail.

As the nights kept growin' colder and the frost
kept bitin' bolder,
I'd crawl into my sleepin'-bag and lie,
And watch those lights a-gleamin' rose and green
and purple streamin',
And great silver flashings mount the northern
sky.

I could never tell the story of those midnight
streams of glory,
How they'd flash and tremble, flush, and fade
away,

The Aurora Borealis lit them black woods like a
palace—

Why them nights was just a bridge from day
to day.

Now we'd crawl up some wild cañon, mebbly
choked with a moraine,

Where you do but little goin' in a day,
With its glacier-stream a-rumble as its milky
waters tumble
Those ghastly, skull-like boulders in its spray.

Or we'd mebbly stray unthinkin' till we'd find
ourselves a-sinkin'

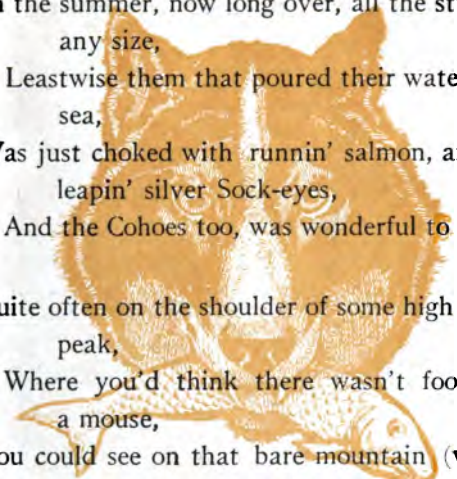
In a "muskeg"—that's a nasty, slimy bog,
Often hid by soft green mosses, they's just h—ll
for mules and hosses,
Why they wouldn't suit a self-respectin' hog!

We'd come on little valleys, green, but shaped
just like coulees,

Where the berries fairly hung in clusters blue,
There we'd often hear a snortin', catch a glimpse
of them cavortin'
As a silver-tip with cubs rushed out of view.



"In the woods we walked on velvet"



In the summer, now long over, all the streams of
any size,
Leastwise them that poured their waters in the
sea,
Was just choked with runnin' salmon, and them
leapin' silver Sock-eyes,
And the Cohoes too, was wonderful to see.

Quite often on the shoulder of some high uplifted
peak,
Where you'd think there wasn't footing for
a mouse,
You could see on that bare mountain (white as
snow, so easy countin')
A dozen goats a-climbin' up for browse.

I said my old ree-volver had killed everything
there was
From little striped gophers up to stags,
But I never could get near them, but would
always somehow skeer them.
No! I never shot a white goat on the crags.

Pretty country? Why yes!—rather,
It was mostly always good and bad by turns,

In the woods we walked on velvet, ankle deep in
lovely mosses,
And I never see so many pretty ferns.

And often in the open, snow-capped peaks were
all around us,
In front, behind, and on our right and left,
And we saw no end of glaciers gleaming in their
rock-bound valleys
With their grimy edges honeycombed and
cleft.

It was then, as I remember, the last part of
November,
And it seemed a year since we was leavin'
"Skag,"
Some days 'twas all plain sailin', but some-
times things were ailin',
And to save our lives we couldn't help but lag.

There was lots and lots of places, where of trails
there wa'n't no traces,
And for weeks we never see a spotted line,



"And we saw no end of glaciers"

Of course, I had my compass, but them foggy
days would stump us
And this time of year there's more of them
than fine.

Now it isn't easy goin' where there's not a mark
a-showin',

That a human's foot was ever 'long that way,
So you couldn't greatly wonder that I sometimes
made a blunder

And got my bearings tangled for a day.

'Twas a drear November evening, it had rained
since early dawn,

And the choking fog hung 'round us like a pall.
We'd been tramping hard since daylight, for I
knowed we must be near it,

If them scamps had ever had the claim at all.

We had come up an "arroyo"—that's Spanish
for a gulch—

With its smallish stream of water running fast,
On its bank ten yards above us, mostly hid by
little bushes,

I could see a row of claimin' stakes at last!!

Pete and me clumb up the clay bank; we was
hungry, wet and cold,

And I hitched him by his halter to a pine.

As I stood and looked around me, I most wish't
someone had drowned me,
That fust night, on "E Dorado Twenty-nine."

Sot the tent up, wet and soggy, had a bad time
with my fire,
Matches damp, and birch-bark kindlin' mighty
scurce.
Fried a little bit of bacon, drew some tea, then
steamin' blankets.
No! I never went to sleep a-feelin' worse!

Next day the sun ris brightly, but it didn't com-
fort me,
I was layin' there most counterfittin' death—
When I heer'd a well known snortin', felt the
ground shake from cavortin',
Follered by a blast of extry-hot mule breath!

I read my deed twict over, walkin' slow around
my claim,
And compared it extry-careful with my stakes;
For mining men gets peevish when adjoinin'
claims seem thievish,
And some undertaker settles up with fakes.



*When you're up above eight thousand and are seein' things like
this*

*There's something 'bout that highness mighty odd,
For the toughest quits his swearing, and the better sort of chap
Somehow seems to feel uncommon close to God*

Then I got out pick and shovel, spread my wash-
pans in a row,

Cleared the bushes from a strip along the creek,
And I couldn't help but wonder, could them
skunks hev made a blunder?

Was I goin' to find what I had come to seek?

Then I wet my hands (as usual), gripped its han-
dle, swung my pick,

And tore out about a half-a peck of clay.

Squatted down and looked it over, then I broke
into a yell,

For I see some yaller traces which was pay!

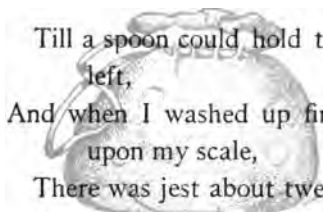
Bet your life things soon got rapid, and I dug out
of that hole,

In about a half-grown "jiffy,"—'t wasn't
more—

Three pans of dirt that glittered so, my heart was
in my mouth

As I squatted down to wash 'em on the shore.

How I whirled them pans of gravel, worked the
pebbles off, and trash,



Till a spoon could hold the fine-stuff what was
left,
And when I washed up final, poured the flakes
upon my scale,
There was jest about twelve-fifty—honest heft.

I was all done bein' wretched, feelin' cold, or wet,
or tired,
For I'd struck it rich and "Hunch" was there
to stay.
So I ate my grub and started in to build a first-
class shack,
For a Yukon winter wasn't far away.

Next day I dug the corner, right ag'in' the
joining claim,
And I took out what a hundred pans would hold,
And underneath a patch of moss a nugget came
in sight,
'Twas an eighty-dollar chunk of solid gold!

I'd pan out till my arms ached, then I'd build the
shack to rest,
I was up by dawn and toiled away till night;

And when that heap of pay-dirt was but tail-
ings in the creek,
I had washed out eighteen hundred, and a mite.

Day by day I hung right to it, and I never see'd
the like.

Yes, I'd struck an "El Dorado" sure enough.
Why it didn't make no matter whereabouts I
druv my pick,

For the shore was jest a "Savings Bank" of
stuff.

Time flew, by late December, for the weather
sure was fine,

I'd salted down a mighty lot of stuff.
How I longed to meet them fellers that had
took my poke of "eight,"

And had give me next to nothing,—sure enough!

In a hole under my blankets, the beef-tins stood
in rows,

And they every one was solid packed with dust.
And a pail that once had lard in, 'twas a 25 I
think,

Had to go without a lid, for it was bust.

I had tent-cloth bags of nuggets, some was big
as half my hand,
With deer-skin pokes, like rice, or grains of corn,
And I'd play with these at midnight, like I used
to do with blocks,
In that dear old Malmo town, where I was born.

I had names for every nugget,—leastwise them
of any size,
And could tell you where they every one was
found.
There was one, a sort of egg-shaped, flattened like
upon its side,
That a chap I met was done with—he was
drowned!

At night I'd make me torches, out of birch-bark
tightly rolled,
And I'd pour out on a clean coyote-skin,
Such piles of flakes and nuggets, and such heaps
of yellow gold,
As was Dawson's price for any sort of sin.

When I'd turn me in my blankets, I'd never mind
the humping

Of those cans that sometimes riz above the floor,
For no fowl e'er grew a feather—search this wide
world altogether—

As downy as those beef-tins, with the hope
of filling more.

When my fire no longer flickered on the sod roof
overhead

And the nipping cold clung to me like a shroud,
I'd lie and build me castles in the sunniest of
Spains,

And I'd plan to be the proudest of the proud.

By the time the ground was frozen, and the first
deep snows had came,—

Oh! about poor Uncle Peter, I forgot,
He fell between two boulders, and he broke his
nigh hind leg—

Well I've met whole heaps of men I'd sooner
shot.

Before the winter set in fair—and you don't mix
up with spring

What the Yukon country usually hands out—

I had fifty-seven thousand six hundred twenty
odd,
When I cinched my snow-shoe lacings and
lit out.



"Hunch" was hoofin' up a street"

First I cached my tools and duffle away back
in the woods,
And I hid my tins of yaller safe and sound,

Then I hit it up for Dawson for a little fun and
rest,
Till the time for picks and shovels next kem
'round.

I'd a coolish tramp to Dawson, 'twas a bunch of
miles for sure,
But I always had been handy with my feet,
And I kept them frames a-slidin' pretty lively
on the crust,
So one mornin' "Hunch" was hoofin' up a street.

I stopped outside the city, and I cut a good ash-
club,
For I knowed about a winter mining town,
Where the "huskies" roam in bunches and the
Malamutes* is fierce,
'Deed I've knowed them dogs to pull a stranger
down.

First I hunted up the feller owning next to
"Twenty-Nine,"
And I quite forgot to say I'd struck it rich,

* A splendid sled dog, a cross between a timber-
wolf and a huskie.



"Where the 'huskies' roam in bunches"

When I spoke to him of sellin', he could hardly
keep from yellin',
He was busted clean, and headin' for the ditch.

Him and me did no disputin', for the chap felt
high falutin'
When I weighed him out two hundred down,
in dust,
'Twas like stealin' baby's candy, and that money
came in handy—
Dawson City wasn't healthy for the bust.

Dawson seemed tremenjous lively to a chap just
off the creeks,

Where for months a mule had been his only
friend,

'Twas for sure a cheerful city, when the boys
drapped in to winter,

Totin' pokes of gold they fairly itched to spend.

'Twas a mighty curious mix-up town of houses,
tents, and shacks,

There was every kind of roost I ever see,
Five the-aters, hotels plenty, but of "jints"
where there was "games"

I disremember all but twenty-three.



"And the Malamutes is fierce"

"Thirst parlors" mebbly fifty, "Denver Jim's,"
and "Santa Fe,"

The "Yukon Trail," the "Lucky Strike,"—
well, say!

If I rounded up that outfit, and corralled the
dance-halls too,

It for sure would take me easy half-a-day.

I hung out at the "Klondike," kept by "Arizony
Ike."

Well, and didn't Isaac's palace burn up dough?
Him and me had ranched together, seen all kinds
of men and weather,

Drivin' Texas steers to market, from below.

Dropped my duffle at the "Klondike," and was
leanin' on the bar,

Thinkin' twenty bits was high for bottled beer,
When I heered the old pianner bein' played in
such a manner

That it sounded most like music to the ear.

Now a Dawson-shack pianner was played on in
a manner

(Most generally, of course, in "miner keys")



"When the boys drapped in to winter"

Fit to bust its box around it, choke all melody
or drown it,
'Twas a stop-your-sleepin' nuisance, if you
please.

I tip-toed to the hall-way, looked across that
dirty lane,
And I ketched a whiff, I guess it was Cologne;

On the stool of that pianner, with a purty air
and manner,
Sat the gal I some time later longed to own.

They called her "Kansas Lizzie," mostly cut it
down to "Liz,"

But why "Kansas" I could never understand,
For her father was a Greaser, and her mother
was a squaw—

An Apache from the lower Rio Grande.

About that "Kansas label," Lizzie never said a
word,

No! she never gave a chirp, or made a sign,
On that point she took no chances, but she
charged ten plunks for dances,
And I pestered her incessant to be mine.

Liz was tall and rather slimmish, with a skin as
white as snow,

And had eyes the brightest ever, I believe.
Her cheeks was like a rose, for good reasons I
suppose,

For I've had that same complexion on my
sleeve.

She was thirty-five year old, and her nigh big
tooth was gold,

When she smiled I thought it livened up her
looks

Liz was there to gather plunks, but she never
danced with drunks,

Lizzie never took no stock in any crooks.

Lizzie old? Well, mebbby so. But the youngest
in the show,

Yes, the youngest pay-girl dancer in the hall—
You mought find it some surprisin', think of
sixty-two! (and risin')—

That was Josephine, whose dancin' beat 'em
all.

Yes, she sure was fascinatin', and it's sober fact
I'm statin',

That in Lizzie's hands poor "Hunch's" heart
was clay,

When she wore pink dancin' clothes, and behind
her ear a rose,

Like them Senoritas down to Santa Fe.

I blew in nine silk dresses, and as for dancin'
shoes

Of the finest kid, at twenty plunks the pair,
She had 'em pink and blue and gold, with the
best silk hose to match;

Lizzie led that Dawson bunch in things to
wear.



"I was goin' after shiners"

Her seal-skin coat (two thousand) by an inch just
missed the floor,

She'd a watch (another thousand), 'twas a
"beaut,"

And she wore a chain of nuggets that went three
times round her neck,

With a ten-of-diamonds pin to foller suit.

Yes, I sure was lovin' "Kansas," but she didn't
care for me.

Was there anything on earth I wouldn't do
To win a smile from Lizzie? Why it almost made
me dizzy

When that solid-gold left upper came in view.

By spring I'd growed down-hearted, was the very
first that started

For the land of gold that's north of Sixty-four.
With me went a dozen miners, I was goin' after
shiners

On a scale a great sight bigger than before.

With that help we built good sluices, riffle-
boxes—all that went

For placer mining as it should be done,
And the way dirt soon was movin' had for me
some little soothin',
And I tried to think of only number one.



"And how them brand-new tents for sure did shine"

I worked my land all over, down to hard-pan
every inch,
And it meant just thirty months to wring it dry,
And I got for my ten hundred, which is what
them claims had cost,
Just a million dollars,—twenty thousand shy.

When I lit out from Dawson, in that spring
of "98,"

Things had surely changed a heap at "Twenty-
Nine,"

For a swarm of men had found me, stakes was
thick for miles around me,

And how them brand-new tents for sure did
shine.

And this is how they found me:—I was pan-
ning out one day,

I'd been working then but thirty days or so,
And I needn't hardly mention that the pan held
my attention,

When a voice close up behind me grunted—
"ho!"

Quick I turned, and there was standing, between
me and the landing,

Two Siwash squaws, one old, the other young,
And they both looked faint and weary and the
younger one some skeery,—

In its cradle on her back, a papoose hung.



"Two Siwash squaws, one old"

The older squaw was toting, I couldn't well help
noting,
The burden in a tump-strap on her head—

They'd been to their cache of salmon, (that's
their winter cure for famine) —
And her load was close to ninety pounds, she
said.

While them squaws was drinkin' tea, it sorta
come to me,
As the oldest one sat smoking by the fire,
That some sock-eye salmon steak would be a
pleasin' break.
After six months' steady, beans and bacon tire.

With a little Siwash patter and considerable of
signs,

At last I got them wimmen folks to see
That I'd like to buy a share of what salmon
flakes they'd spare,
From that dirty pack I hung up on a tree.

Then I turned my blankets up, and I reached for
a tin-cup.

(I seen they both was noticin' my stuff),
And I gev them in a rag, quite a decent little jag
Of the yaller dust, that's money sure enough.

I had giv the kid some tea, made as sweet as
sweet could be,
And the little chap was makin' signs for more,
When I picked the cradle up, and I kissed that
Injun pup
Stickin' in a scabbard, like my "44."

Then the old squaw took her pack, now it didn't
drag her back
When she set the greasy tump-strap on her
brow,
And the younger (almost pretty) slung her
papoose by its thong,
Then they hit the trail, looked back, and
grunted "how!"

It was mebbly six weeks after, when I waked up
heerin' laughter,
And somebody whistlin' at a dance-hall air;
Had my boots on in a second, clum a tree, and
then I reckoned
There was men and tools and duffle everywhere.

Gangs was up the stream on both sides,
Drivin' stakes in every bloomin' inch of shore.

'Twas the fust of Klondike travel, they was
frantic to see gravel,—
Well, I cal-culate I needn't say no more.

"Cheeshako—big gold can, way up creek in
Yukon lan'"

Was the spark that quickly bursted into
flame,
It was what them Injuns told 'bout them salmon-
flakes they'd sold,
And the heap of dust I showed to pay for same.

When I'd worked them claims both over—
And you bet I went to bed-rock everywhere—
I gathered up my treasure, off to Dawson hiked
for pleasure
As the papers said, almost a millionaire.

Lizzie still was there and dancing, and she seemed
to me entrancing;
She'd a sort of partnership in Sante Fe;
I met her at a party, and she shook my hand
quite hearty,
And I noticed in her hair a leetle gray.

How'd I feel? Why worse than ever, for I could
forget her never,
And there didn't seem to be so much in life.
And I urged her good and plenty, begged her
fifteen times or twenty,
To go down to Californy as my wife.

"Cut it out,"—Come, Liz, I need you,
Need you dreadful for my job of millionaire.
Then she'd laugh with head a-tossin', say she
couldn't stand no bossin',
And to tell the truth, for me she didn't care.

One Tuesday night a bunch of us was up to
Santa Fe,
Both men and girls together, eight or nine,
Liz was settin' with Big Simpson on the stoop
outside the hall,
When she over-heer'd some foolish talk of mine.

I was talkin' about Lizzie to a most particler
friend,
And was tellin' him my heart was nearly broke,

I said "I'd give her weight in gold, if she would
marry me,"

And for sure I didn't mean it for a joke.

Then I heer'd a silk dress rustle, and I caught a
glimpse of blue,

While a woman's voice, soft, whispered in my
ear,

"I heer'd what you was sayin', Hunch, about
my weight in gold,

And I'll take you at that figger now and here!"

For a minnit I was dazed like, for I couldn't
scarce believe

That the Belle of Dawson,—how my brain did
reel,—

But I pulled myself together, and I said, "Well,
Lizzie dear,

I'll come up on Friday night and close the deal."

It seemed like that next Friday night was never
goin' to come,

But it did, and then 'twas me for Santa Fe,

And I brought up in a buggy, pokes of dust and
nuggets too,
To the heft I figgered Lizzie ought to weigh.

Right adjoinin' to the dance-hall was a big out-
fitting store,
Where us miners bought most every kind of
stuff,
Its proprietor, O'Connor, had a swingin' pair of
scales,
Just the thing to weigh a bride on, sure enough.

'Bout eight o'clock came Lizzie with a dozen of
her friends,
In her heaviest boots, big cloak and blanket-
shawl.
But I said, "Not enny, Lizzie, them scales will
not get busy
Till you're dressed like you was dancin' in
the hall."

Then all hands burst out a-laughing, and I got
some merry chaffing,
While Lizzie went to shed that extra rig.

Then they bunched up close together, just like
sheep in winter weather,
And they bet on Lizzie's heft, some betting big.

She stepped in on the swingin' board, held steady
by the chains,
And her head riz somewhat higher than the
bar,
While I staked my pile agin' her, and as sure as
I'm a sinner,
As to heft, she beat my cal-cu-la-tions far.

I piled up on my scale-end, bags of nuggets pokes
of dust,
And at thirty thousand slackened up to see
Why "Bridal Stock" wa'nt risin', it for sure was
some surprisin',
So of thousand pokes on went another three.

Then the betting ring came closer and some of
the jocosers
Kept a pokin' fun, for which I didn't care.
I was piling gold on steady, had coughed thirty-
nine of ready,
When I see my Lizzie swingin' in the air.



"Sure would make an Injun totem stop and look"

In the bunch of friends around us, who with
cheers had well nigh drowned us,
Was the Reverend Theophilus McShay.
"Mac" said he was a D. D., to a "high degree"
was "C. D.,"
Now was washing plates for keep, and ten a day.

We was married in the parlor close adjoinin' to
the bar.

Style? Episcopal, O. K., with ring and book.
Then I throwed the house wide open, and the
bill I got next day
Sure would make an Injun-totem stop and
look.

My best man was Johnnie Peyton, late of Gal-
veston in Tex,
And he was about the best I ever see.
Lizzie's bridesmaid, Mam-zell Julie, once a pray-
mi-air ballay—
Used to kick off hats for fun, in gay Paree.

Next day 'twas us for Frisco. Liz was mad enough
to cry
When they throwed a peck of meal upon her
gown,
But she managed to keep quiet in that ever-
lastin' riot,
When I whispered, "rice is twenty bits a
pound!"

On our way to San Francisco we stopped a day
at "Skag,"

And I don't think Jim was sorry that we came,
For I cut the proper caper, handed him a
strip of paper

With five figures to the westward of my name.

When we got down to Frisco, where I hadn't
been for years,

I hunted up a lawyer right away,
And on Mrs. Lizzie settled three hundred thou-
sand down;

As a mackintosh against a rainy day.

Next I bought a fine house furnished, in the
swellest part of town,

With a splendid view across the shining bay,
Gave a grand house-warming party, asking every-
one we knew,

'Twas the finest racket ever, so they say.

Everybody was invited, not a man or woman
slighted,

And we sure corralled a herd of coarse and fine.

Like a cow turned loose in clover, it was *me* felt
good all over

When I met the bunch that sold me "Twenty-
nine."

We had bands of music, dancing, flowers, with
grub and booze the best,

Bet there wasn't any good thing but was there.
The ball took in at ten o'clock, held on till noon
next day,

When we turned the last bunch out—in bad
repair.

When we'd sorta got our bearings, after living
there two weeks,

I took a trip down San Diego way,
To look some cattle over, see a ranch or mebbly
two:

I was sizing up investments that would pay.

When I got back to Frisco that grand house was
shut up tight,

And I didn't seem to see no signs of life,

I just naturally wondered what had happened in
that week,
And when and where I'd meet up with my wife?

Then I hunted up a neighbor and I heerd a tale
that sure,
For the moment almost took away my breath,
Liz had skipped to Arizona with a young and
handsome "sport,"
And her note said—was "His truly until death."

Then misfortunes came in bunches, as you know,
they mostly do,
I got badly squeezed in stocks and mines and
land,
Lizzie gone, I steady blundered, and I know the
boys all wondered
To see a once-was hustler, out of sand.

Yes, my ~~fortune~~ fairly melted, all the gold I'd
toiled to win
Seemed to slip away like mist before the sun.
My debts was like a mountain, and the round-
up and accountin'
Left "your Uncle" jest as poor as he begun.

*From the rock where we'd been sitting, "Hunch"
arose, picked up his pail,*

*While I tried my best to slip in his hand
A bit of folded paper, of a color chiefly green,
But he turned and said, I'd have you under-
stand.*

*That you're welcome to my story, if you think
it worth your time,*

And then added with a serio-comic air:

*I'll gladly burn your weeds up, yes, smoke
every blessed one,*

But don't try to V a poor X-millionaire.

*But. I really must be going for some grub and
then a sleep,*

*For even night-shift workers snooze, and
munch.*

*He reached me out a hand of born, and smiling
said, Good-bye!*

*Then a dingy open doorway swallowed
"Hunch!"*

A Tub Tragedy.

Mary Ellen Magee had just turned forty-three,
When she drifted to Bennett from "Skag,"
Where she'd buried her husband, blown up in a
blast,
When himself was lit up with a jag.

The widow was pretty, for time had been kind
To a skin like a Kerry cow's milk,
Laughing eyes of deep brown, and she wore for a
crown,
In a snood, troubled waters of silk.

Her hair was entrancing, in red golden waves,—
was it brown?—
One might possibly err?
Like a painting by Titian, immortal Venetian,—
'twas a chestnut
Just dropped from its burr.



"When she drifted to Bennett from 'Skag'"

'Twas that spring in the Nineties when Bennett
just boiled

With an army gone crazy for gold,
When labor, clothes, victuals, well any old thing,
Need only be seen, to be sold.

'Twas a poor little shack with its walls of spruce
slabs,

And with gaps in its rough puncheon floor,
And it stood at the mouth of a deep little gulch,
But a rod from the shingle-strewn shore.

The roof overhead was of cloth badly sagged,
And for light there were eight grimy panes,

And a door weather-warped feebly fought with
the winds,
As that poor canvas roof with the rains.

At the back, with a roofing of flattened oil tins,
And upheld by two small cedar trees,
Was a rickety porch, where when business was
slack
Mary Ellen might counterfeit ease.

It was here at the first, after toiling for hours,
When the night was as black as a sloe,
That she'd sit and look out on Lake Bennett's
broad face,
All aflush with the Northern Lights glow.

There she'd sit—and she'd gaze, in those velvety
nights,
On those armies of glittering stars,
From her throne of a rough wooden box, up on
end,
With its legend, "OLEIN,—50 BARS."

In that poor little shelter, when weary and worn,
She would flee to the wreck of a chair,
From the smothering reek of the suds, and hot
irons,
And she'd drink of that sweet mountain air.



"An army gone crazy for gold"

There were times when a soap-wrinkled hand
would apply
To the stumpy "dudeen" a live coal,
And the sharp pungent incense of "Shag" floated
up,
With its powers to speak peace to a soul—

As the wreaths floated up from that murmuring
bowl,
And were lost in the darkness of night,
'Twas a swift flying shuttle of dreams Mary
threw,
And the fabric she wove, sure was bright.

Mary rented the shanty and soon had her sign,
Painted bold, hanging over the door
By a clean-busted artist, on his uppers, for
home,
Sure, she washed his one shirt for the score.

Then he gave a big shingle a good coat of white,
And on it, in letters of black,
Said: Shirts at eight "bits," or with drawers for
sixteen,
Strictly cash when you get the clothes back.

Sure she'd scarce off her bonnet or hung up her
shawl,
When a mob toting bundles rushed in,
Like a herd of wild Injuns they shouted and
yelled—
Was the divil himself in them min?



"And soon had her sign painted bold"

In less than ten minutes they dumped on the floor,
"Pay dirt," that to "wash" meant a week,
And the most put their money right into her
hand,
Leaving Mary too rattled to speak.

In the coin and the paper she took that first day
Was a stove, tubs and buckets, and food,
And the stars still were shining when Mary next
day
Started in heart and soul, to "make good."

Could any one wonder or should it surprise,
That over the widow's fair head
There went never a week but a score came to
seek,
And to find that she never would wed.

By the light of a smoke-crusted lamp overhead,
With her shapely white arms in the suds,
Mary Ellen stood rubbing a fortune some day
From that extra foul mountain of duds.

Ah no! she'd not marry; in truth she was wed,
And her husband, that gold-getting thirst
That had poisoned her patrons, sore tarnished
the best,
And had driven the bad to their worst.

Yes, the fever had seized on her, body and soul,
As the dollars were washed from her "claim,"
And she toiled like a galley slave, chained to his
bench,
And ere long, day and night were the same.

She would scarce stop to eat, and she clung to
her tub,
Till her arms and her brain could no more.
Then she'd lie on her pallet and gloat o'er the
heap,
And the cash it would add to her store.

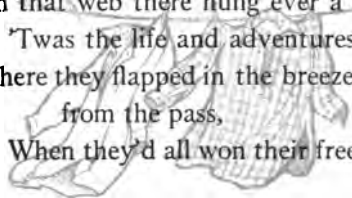
She'd a sizable biscuit-tin full up of cash,
With another not greatly behind,
But she'd stick to her washing another month yet,
And then, if she knew her own mind,

It was up and away to dear Kerry's green hills,
To her folks in old Nocknagaree,
And then, "Glory to God," once again on "the
sod," —
Sure a quane couldn't happier be.

There was Maggie her sister, two girls and a boy,
Well and wouldn't they jump at the chance
To open their hearts and their home to her then?
When they're rich, Ireland's easy for aunts.

From the roughly trimmed cedars, the posts of
her porch,
Like a web spread a network of lines
To a couple of firs, and beyond to a bunch
Of convenient, second-growth pines.

In that web there hung ever a motley array,
'Twas the life and adventures of "Shirt."
There they flapped in the breeze that swept down
from the pass,
When they'd all won their freedom from dirt.



Shirts a-traveling north were most generally
good,
Sound in tail, bosom, buttons, and cuff,
And for these Mary Ellen got civilized dough,
And their washing was easy enough.

But the shirt coming south spread a different
"tail,"

Quite indifferent even at best,
For, not to mince matters, 'twas often mere
tatters,
'Twould be scorned by a scare-crow well
dressed.

And when those "back-comers," those "quit-
ters" paid up,

'Twas in dust, with a spoon, from a poke,
And many's the small extra pinch Mary got,
As the price of a smile and a joke.

'Twas a congress of tunics from every clime,
From close-by to remotest Cathay,
And the grove looked as bright as a Cowes yacht
bedight
When "His Nibs" will run down for the day.

Here's a shirt of pink cambric, still smelling of
musk,
With a flower-spray 'broidered in front,

From the Rue des Beaux Arts, and from Julie's
fair hands,
To Alphonse, when he joined the great hunt.

It elbows the shirt of a hard-headed Scot,
Somber gray, somewhat faded perchance,
From the fleece of a smutty-faced Grampian
ewe,
Quite a different tog from La France?

Next a sweater,—you've seen 'em, dark blue,
with a Y,
On some splendid chap bucking the line;
Without Father's knowledge he'd cut loose from
college,
Well, he hadn't *yet* picked out his mine.

Three shirts of Giuseppe's, of flame-colored silk—
He's the Dago that made a big strike,—
Then a green, with a grand yellow harp on the
breast,
Could it have any owner but Mike?

Six shirts of black cotton next sway in the breeze,
Large buttons of pearl down the front;

Then a weather-stained khaki, with fringe on
its skirt,
From a camp-boss named Henderson Hunt.

Then another boy's sweater, a black, somewhat
dim,
With a great orange "P" on the breast,
He too had cut college, sans the Governor's
knowledge
And he wasn't cock-sure, for the best.

Of the coarse wiry wool of the flocks of Bretagne,
Ashen gray, neatly patched with a sock,
Hung the tog of a Channel coast sea-faring man,
'Twas a Gurnsey Isle fisherman's frock.

Sure she'd shirts of all nations, of every kind,
Color, texture, weave, trimming, and wear,
And the winds from the cañon or up the blue
lake
Never caught Mary's drying lines bare.

Her dirty dim lamp, with its coating of flies,
Ever shone through the grime-coated pane,
As Mary stood washing for ever and aye,
With a soul fairly famished for gain.

Her shoulders were bent, and her bright eye

~~grown dim,~~

But she never recoiled from the lash,
From the stripes of her taskmasters, "Gold Lust"
and "Greed,"

When each welt meant a dollar in cash.

And somehow old Kerry seemed further away.

Was its beauty the dream of a girl?
Would "Mag" and the "childer" sure welcome
her back?

Could she ever cut loose from this whirl?

Well, she'd work a week longer, and fill up the
tin,

Shake the shack, and set out for the East,
With a draft on the Limerick Bank in her clothes,
'Twould be "5," then three ciphers at least.

It was early September, the day was but young,
And the Lake a blue mirror of glass,
Giving back to each mountain its quota of green,
And its snow to the peak in the pass.



"And its snow to the peak in the pass"

Mary's lamp was not burning, no swashing of
suds,

And no low crooning song of "the sod,"
And a "chink" who was bringing a roll to be
washed,

Thought the stillness remarkably odd.

He followed the well-beaten path through the
rocks,

As it curved to the rear of the shack,

Saw the lines had their freighting of things out
to dry,—

Then his felt-shoes turned thoughtfully back.

“Ying” crept to the window, breathed hard on
a pane,

And with sleeve rubbed a hole in the grime,
Took one peep, gave a yell fit to waken the
dead,

Then he smashed Bennett’s record for time.

A crowd quickly gathered and rushed to the shack,

Pulled the latch-string, swung open the door,
And there, with her head on a ten-dollar “loss,”
Mary Ellen lay dead on the floor.

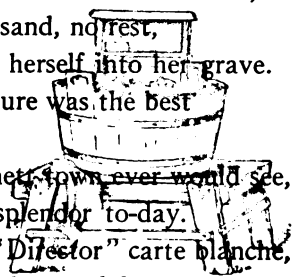
No green hills of Kerry, no sister with bairns;

No draft for five thousand, no rest,
Mary Ellen had washed herself into her grave.

Well, her funeral for sure was the best

That the people of Bennett town ever would see,
And they tell of its splendor to-day.

For they gave a Seattle “Director” carte blanche,
And he took her five thousand for pay.



Jean.

He sat in the dim little Café Rousseau,
With his pipe and a glass of Vermouth,
'Twas the painter Lerboulet, a pauper in fame,
But of wealth in the treasures of youth.

On the floor of an attic, in Rue du Couronne,
(Three "Milletts" divided the rent),
Jean had dozens of canvases facing the wall,
With the proceeds of one nearly spent.

As he sipped he turned over, and skimmed as
he turned,
A "Figaro" spread on his knee.
When his wandering, aimless, pre-occupied eye
Caught, "Great news from Les Etats Unis."

'Twas a bit from Le Klondike, and Yukon
Rivière,
Where the gold lay all over the ground,
Which thousands and thousands were rushing to
win,
And where one lucky Frenchman had found,

In less than a fortnight, with shovel and pick,
By himself, in the bed of a stream,
The fortune Jean Baptiste so frequently won
And so lavishly spent—in a dream.

Jean rose from the table like one in a trance,
Paid his score and strolled into the park,
And he gave the old woman ten sous for his chair
When he wandered away in the dark.

To "Le Circle Artistique" that night he ne'er
came,
At his lodgings he hadn't been seen,
And the knights of the palette and ladies who
pose
Sorely missed the all-conquering Jean.

From their music and dancing, chanson and
gavotte,

He had fled through the balmy June night,
By a cheap midnight train, creeping slow through
Touraine.

And close crouched by one flickering light

That wonderful "Figaro" story he read,
And he read, and then read it again,
Till each paragraph, syllable, letter in sooth,
Fairly tatooed itself on his brain.

In the gray of the dawning, o'er vineyard and
glebe,

Over orchard, and grass-land, and corn,
With two sentinel poplars guarding the door,
Stood the house where Jean Baptiste was born.

How well he remembered the path through the
fields,

By the moat of the Castle Langeais,
Where the silver-haired Seigneur, now long in his
grave,
From his chair watched the children at play.

Jean quickened his pace as he drew near the house,
And a sabot's clank fell on his ear,
And with it the voice that of all upon earth
Was the one most especially dear.

With her back to the door of the dark little room,
Had she heard his quick step? would she turn?
Jean's mother with sturdy white arms in the air,
Plied the staff to and fro in the churn.

A sister looked up, caught his eye, and anon
The hand with its quick waving beck,
While two sturdy, velveteen, "only son's" arms
Found their way 'round his mother's soft neck.

She turned on the instant. "Mon Dieu! it is
Jean!"

Then she swooned in an excess of joy,
But a fan of Jean's beret, a sip of red wine,
And a fond arm encircled her boy.

Across from the stables Jean's father clanked in,
And he kissed the dear son on each cheek,

Then a simple meal over, the men lit their pipes,
And 'twas time for Jean Baptiste to speak.

He read them the "Figaro's" marvelous tale
Of the gold in that far distant land,
Where nuggets like pebbles were lying about
And where every small rivulet's sand

Held fabulous fortunes awaiting the man
With that thing which "Les Anglais" call
"pluck."

And he ended by saying he'd made up his mind
To try in Le Klondike his luck.

If the father would loan him the louis he'd need
For the journey, his outfit, and clothes,
He could pay the loan over and over again,
And indeed it was safe to suppose

That in such a country just teeming with gold,
And with capital, courage, and youth,
At the end of a year he'd be back in Touraine
With a marvelous fortune forsooth.

They sat in the arbor and talked the thing o'er,
Weighed its cost and the chance of success.
And the son, deeply versed in that peasant père's
greed,
On its certain large profits laid stress.

And so it fell out that the same creeping train
Which brought penniless Jean to Langeais
Carried back to Parez quite a different man,—
In a Jean well equipped for the fray.

For Farmer Lerboulet had toiled all his days
On the snug little farm at Langeais,
And was rich, as they estimate wealth in Touraine,
And in fact was well able to pay

For Jean's great adventure far over the seas,
To that land where the gold lay in sight.
So they kissed him, and blessed him, and waved
their adieux
As their idol was lost in the night.

At "Le Circle Artistique" Jean made quite a stir,
With his flitting from palette to pick,

And the girls and their painters all crowded
around,
Cheered and wished him a "milliard" and quick.

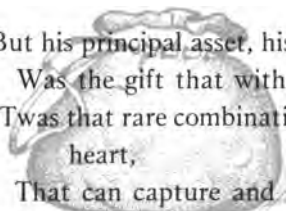
But one of the models, the beautiful Claire,
Through her sobs only longed to be dead,
But she smiled when her lover, with arm 'round
her waist,
Swore he'd bring home a fortune and wed.

In his "Judgment of Paris," the apple was
Claire's
And her beauty at least had been sung
By those "Judges of Paris" who thought the
work *bad*,
Though it did *not* deserve to be hung.

Jean could "parlez" some "Anglais," "com-
prenez" a lot,
But the one whose remarks were ne'er vain
Was his dearest companion, the bright Louis
d'-or
From the Banks of the Loire, in Touraine.

On a beautiful morning yet early in June,
With the larks singing high in the air,
Jean climbed up the side of a deep-laden "tramp"
At the little coast town St. Nazaire.

Jean Baptiste Lerboulet was thirty, was tall,
Broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and when
The sun and the winds tanned his city-paled cheek
He had what is called beauty in men.



But his principal asset, his "pearl of great price,"
Was the gift that with life only ends,
'Twas that rare combination of tongue, brain and
heart,
That can capture and colonize friends.

That small dirty freighter, the "Mermaid," as soon
As the last of "belle France" was "hull down,"
Ran into rough weather and a fortnight had
lapsed
Ere Jean saw in the sun going down

Those lofty white cliffs with their cañons between,
Where like bees on great sections of comb

Men cluster, and bee-like the busy wax rich,
But where drones find no footing or home.

Then that overland journey, so endless to Jean;
Would those cities, towns, mountains, lakes,
plains,
Forever keep running ahead of his coach?
Would he never be free from those trains?

At last in Seattle; was everyone mad?
Had no one a moment to spare?
Was its whole population, of every nation,
Determined to die or "get there"?

Then a rotten old steamer, where, herded like swine
Men received for their fabulous fare
The poorest of food, scarcely shelter at all,—
But for trifles like these who could care?

Then after ten horrible days of a voyage,
With icebergs, boat-groundings, and fog,
In the darkness an anchor plunged down in the
bay,
And they cheered at the bark of a dog.



"With icebergs, boat-groundings, and fog

Yes—Skagway at last. 'Twas the little new town,
To the Klondike its easiest door,
With its tents and rough shanties like mushrooms
sprung up,
And its mountains of freight on the shore.

Jean had the good fortune to stumble on friends,
Two men from Saumur, in Touraine,
They had been there some days and were just
starting north
With a seasoned old miner, a Dane.

On a low-lying flat, where a bright brawling
stream

Found the sea, at the head of a bay,
Like the gourd of the Prophet sprung up in the
night,
Stood the soon-to-be town of Skagway.



"Its mountains of freight on the shore"

To its shacks, and its shanties, tents, hovels, and
huts,

Hasty shelters from weather and wind,
There was gathered an host with its Babel of
tongues,
But with one single object in mind.

They came from Australia, from Turkey, France,
Spain,
From the Cape; was there yet any land
That could hold back its people when once they
had read
Of the Yukon's auriferous sand?

"Greed" hung out its banner, "Quick-Wealth"
beat its drum,
And recruits by the thousand poured in,
And the saint for the time, laying virtue aside,
Swelled the ranks of notorious sin.

One threw down his hammer, another his pen,
Another his shuttle, scythe, brush,
Some e'en fled the pulpit, spurned well-endowed
chairs,
For a place in that gold-maddened rush.



"Our Jean fell in line"

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From a point on the river three miles above
"Skag,"

In an hour, easy reached in a boat,
Starts the old Dead-Horse Trail, whence the
things that avail

Are broad shoulders, the tump-strap, and
"tote."

One midsummer morning our Jean fell in line,
That incessantly swarmed up the trail,
Heavy laden with "duffle," tools, clothing, and
grub,
Now his peasant-sired sinews avail.

For he trudged up the narrow rough pass with a
song,

And for mates who lagged back in the rear
He lightened their luggings, new-hearted the
faint,
How his "gay Paris chansons" did cheer!

On the Valley's low ledges the tramping was good,
And the toters, aye even the lax,
Made excellent time,—till they came to the place
That the nerve and the sinews sore tax.



"That loose, rolling stone filled ravine"

Ah! the anguish of toil in the terrible climb
Up that boulder-strewn, deep-trodden road,
So narrow, so constantly verging the cliff,
And that spine-racking sway of the load.

Those steepes of bare rock, slimy patches of moss,
And that loose, rolling stone filled ravine,
'Twas a horrible stress on that line, as of ants,
Ere the White Pass's summit was seen.

Any sort of an outfit, if worthy the name,
Meant three trips for the tote of its stuff,
And those thirteen tough miles to the summit
for most
Took the best of a week, "sure enough."

On the summit, that army, toil-wracked to the
verge
Where endurance had drained to its dregs
The beaker that started o'er-flowing with grit,
Halts, to rest its brain, body, and legs.

Like the armies of Israel swarming the heights,
With the Promised Land spread at their feet,

This army of gold-seekers gaze on a scene
That is grand, soul-inspiring, and sweet.

Around them on every hand mountains arise,
Timber-clad from their base to the peak,
With crownings of fleecy, perpetual snows,
And where one may discern an' he seek,

In the lake's sleeping mirror, outspread at his
feet,
Lo! a vision in echo of these,
Snow mountains, and glaciers, with their gleam
of green ice,
O'er the billowing tops of the trees.

From that hardly won summit, the winding trail
sinks,
And in the blue distance afar,
Miles Cañon hath sundered the mountains in
twain,
With its gate to the Yukon ajar.

And here for that army of toilers there ends
Those body and soul-racking totes

Hereafter no knapsack, no tump-strap on brow,
Hence they seek El Dorado in boats.



"In the lake's sleeping mirror"

Jean bought him a boat at a fabulous price,
For that roughly built, broad-beamed batteau
Cost him sixty gold louis, and the most thought
him wise
As the market for such was not slow.

Did he know any boating? could he handle an oar
Or a paddle, a pick-pole, or sweep?

Could he hold a boat steady and true on her
course,
When like furies the hissing waves leap?

As a boy he'd been out with his Uncle Raoul,
He who fished from St. Pol, Finisterre,
Often handled the lugger, or helped with the
trawls,
And he had no acquaintance named Fear.

Jean shipped tools and duffle with consummate
care,
And when that bestowment was done,
No other Cheeschako was better equipped
For that terribly perilous run

Than was light-hearted, broad-shouldered Jean
Lerboulet,
As he stood in that much trodden mud,
Whence the deep laden barges, the lighters and
scows,
Cautious crept to the verge of the flood.

At first over water as oily and smooth
As a midsummer, sun-basking pond,
Whereon, to the breast of the twittering swift,
Great, slow-spreading circles respond.

Then the broad current narrows, grows rapidly
less,
And small whirling eddies appear,
And the water, grown black, has an ominous
heave
And a low, sullen roar greets the ear.

Now a turn to the left through the narrowing gate,
'Twixt a cañon's walls towering high,
With turrets sparse-crested with dwindling pines,
And above them a glimpse of blue sky.

Then, pent 'twixt those basaltic barriers grim,
With its waves leaping high in the air,
Like Orestes pursued by the Furies there sped
A flood, for the fearless to dare.

'Spite of eddy, and whirlpool, and billows that
leaped

From the rocks in the tideway at least
A fathom in height, in a deluge of spray,
And with thunderous roar never ceased,

The Rapids of White Horse sore tempted the man,
Trail-weary and pack-worn, to breast
Its dangers that dally with death in a mile,
But that saves a week's toting at best.

Jean bided his time, and anon in his turn
Pushed the deep-laden scow to the fore,
And then leaned on a paddle and listened intent
To some friends who had been there before,

Who had many times baffled that fierce torrent's
rage,
And who knew its each perilous pitch,
And had seen brave Cheechakos swept instant
to death
In the maw of that terrible ditch.

"Yaller Charley," a Tlinkit—for an Indian good,
But with one of those totem-pole faces,
With its deeply carved welcome a sudden knife
Gave to the fifth in a family of "aces"!

Whate'er his shortcomings, that Tlinkit, Jean's
friend,

With an oar, in the stern, at his post,
Was a class by himself for that White Horse
Pass run.

No! there wasn't his like on the coast.

He tried in his lingo to coach Lerboulet,
Gave him points how to win through the flood,
And to piece out his Indian-patter he drew
A crude chart with a stick, in the mud.

Jean's boat was but small, so his friends urged in
vain,

That he give "Tlinkit Charley" an oar.
He could easily manage his boat all alone,
And so save twenty bright louis-d'or.

So, stripped to the sleeveless red shirt that he
wore

When he pulled a stout oar on the Seine,
Jean Baptiste Lerboulet launched forth, waved
adieux,

And was off—that great fortune to gain.



"One of those totem-pole faces"

At the first he moved slowly—so slowly, forsooth,
That his eye even noted the ferns
That grew in the drip of those black, sweating
cliffs;
But ere long, 'round the sharpest of turns,

His boat gave a leap like a hare from her form,
When she catches the bay of the hound.
And those instant terse sinews respond to his call,
And those arms, once so white, now so browned,

Like a bracing of steel bind the oar to its notch,
As he rides on the top of the comb
In a deafening roar, and a deluge of spray
From the rocks, rising black through the foam.

The pace was terrific; had the scow taken wing?
'Twas delirious, Jean shouted and sang,
And above the black cañon's deep, thunderous
boom,
Like a trumpet, the Marseillaise rang.

Already the cañon's mouth loomed straight
ahead,

With a stretch of wild water between,
But whose ravening waves, and the current's
 mad sweep,
Could not daunt our all-conquering Jean.



"The black cañon's deep thunderous boom"

When, alas! with the confidence born of escapes,
And regarding himself as immune,
Jean slackens his grip on the oar, the least bit,
When, considerably sooner than soon,

The bow swerved a trifle, then broadside the
stream,
Dashed quite uncontrolled on a rock,
Was riven throughout from the stem to the stern,
While its cargo flew out with the shock.

Grub, duffle, and clothing, tools, blankets and
tent,
All those hard-earned French louis had bought,
Were lost in a moment, and Jean Lerboulet
For his life in those seething waves fought.

Jean swam like a duck, so a few lusty strokes
Brought him safe to the cañon's bleak shore.
Thence he easily climbed up its face of rough
rock,
Sunned his clothes, and sat thinking things
o'er.



"With a stretch of wild water between "

His total possessions were easily summed,
A shirt, khaki trousers, feet bare,
The better to steady himself in the boat,
So the fisher-folk sailed from Nazaire.

In a belt 'round his waist, what was left of his
gold,
Round his neck on its bright little chain,
The beautiful face of the raven-haired Claire.
Would she pose for him ever again?

But Jean's greatest possession no torrent could
drown,
'Twas by far the best thing in his kit,
'Twas that steadfast, unshrinking, determinate
will
That his friends in Alaska called "grit."

Three fortnights had lapsed since his outfit
was joined
To a luckless great number before,
When again, by a somewhat less deep-laden scow,
At the head of the pass on the shore

Jean Baptiste stood waiting his turn to embark,
And surrounded by friends who protest
He steadfast refused many proffers of help,
He could handle his boat with the best.

He had mastered the Rapids of White Horse in
sooth,
Knew their rocks, eddies, cross-currents, each,
And he harbored no doubt that this time he'd
win out,
And could land every ounce on the beach.

And again hands are shaken, hats waved once
again,

With a loud, cheery, answering shout
Lerboulet swings free, disappears 'round the bend,
And once more for the Yukon sets out.

He lay on his back, tightly wedged in the cleft
Of a low shelving rock by the shore,
With its jagged points tearing a tissue of foam,
Like the fangs of some terrible boar.

With a water-bleached face, and its tiny blue
bruise

O'er the eye, whence forever had fled
All recking of time, or of creature, or space,
Jean Baptiste Lerboulet lay dead!

And around the full throat gleamed a tiny gold
chain,

And on that forever stilled breast
A little gold disc with its image of Claire,
Claimed the heart of her lover,—at rest.

And under the low-drooping boughs of a birch,
Where the mist ever freshens the grass,
While a priest homeward bound read the prayers
for the dead,
At the foot of that mountain-girt pass

They buried Jean Baptiste, with J. B. L. carved
By a friend on the roughly hewn cross.
And a kindly framed letter to Langeais, Tour-
aine,
Bore the tale of that only son's loss.



A Hardware "Hold-up"

Now Abner Swift was a man of thrift,
And one might truly say
That enterprises "swiftly" worked
Were seldom "slow" to pay.

In Skagway Abner kept a store,
The best of six or seven,
When that gold fever busted out
Along in Ninety-seven.

When everybody just went mad,
The whole town seemed outfitting,
And every day a heap of folks
Up Yukon-way was flitting.

(117)

118 A HARDWARE "HOLD-UP"

And ere those three score miles were past,
 Oh! how the smartest,—smarted!
They lugged their stuff up the Dead-Horse Trail,
 No wagons then had started.



"In Bennett, by the river"

How bones did ache, and backs most break,
 And spinal columns quiver,
Ere they'd drop their duffle and weary selves
 In Bennett, by the river.

There they built them boats, and once safe past
 One terribly perilous mile,
 O'er the Yukon's flood for weeks could sail,
 To bask in Fortune's smile.

"Swift" hadn't a drop of Jason's blood,
 He never felt "Argonaut-y,"
 But his lambs mostly yielded "a golden fleece,"
 As they often "swiftly" thought,—eh?



"There they built them boats"

He sold them duffle and grub and tools,
 And he said, without bravado,
 That if he might handle their £., s., d.,
 They might keep their El Dorado.

The thoroughly practical Abner Swift
 Among his facts could number,
 That never a boat had been builded yet
 Without nails, in addition to lumber.

A Cheechako would know, that to build a
 batteau,
 For that rough Yukon voyage availing,
 Required the stout bracing it only could get
 From a better than usual good nailing.

So one morning friend Abner had rolled up a keg,
 In a blanket the better for toting,
 Of extra good ten-penny nails such as used
 By the men who are experts in boating.

Then he lugged that uncomfortable hundred
 pound keg
 Up the trail that was rough, steep, and narrow,

Until its each nail was an un-wailed wail,
And a wrench to his sore spinal marrow.

But when he reached Bennett and threw down
his load,
The "sore bone" gave place to the "funny,"
For the builders of boats gathered swift 'round
that keg
Like the flies round a spot of spilled honey.

Nails! Nails! Give us nails! is the cry that pre-
vails,
And in less than the time for its telling,
At "two-bits" the nail, came an end to the sale,
There was naught but the keg left for selling.

In an hundred pound ten-penny keg of wire
nails,
By count there are seventy hundred,
So in rating that deal as a neat stroke of trade,
Few would think Brother Swift to have blun-
dered.

122 A HARDWARE "HOLD-UP"

Abner rested a day, then home wended his way,
And with seventeen hundred and fifty,
As his earnings from sales of one keg of wire
nails,
Has e'er since been regarded as thrifty.



FINIS

Glossary

CACHED: Placed in a cache, an underground hiding-place, sometimes under a cairn or pile of stones. Bulky articles of small value are often cached by suspending them between two trees on a platform or frame-work.

CHEECHAKO: In the Siwash, Chilkat, Tlinkit, Puyallup and other Indian dialects, the equivalent of Stranger, Newcomer, "Tenderfoot."

COULEE: A dry ravine or gulch, often with a channel worn by spring floods resulting from the melting snows on near-by mountains.

GREASER: A lower class Mexican, especially a vaquero or "cow-puncher."

GRUB-STAKE: An arrangement by which a storekeeper or other capitalist furnished an outfit of tools, food, clothing, etc., to a miner to be paid for by a certain percentage of gold should he make a strike.

HARD-PAN: The underlying stratum below which gold is never found—also "bed-rock," rock bottom, etc.

HUSKIE: Any kind of dog driven in a sledge team.

MALAMUTE: A specially fine breed of sledge dogs with a strong infusion of timber-wolf blood, large, powerful, and exceptionally fierce; they usually have soft fur-like coats.

POKE: The small sausage shaped-bags, usually of soft-tanned buckskin, universally used to carry gold-dust, and in the smaller sizes serving as purses.

SOUR-DOUGH: When making bread or biscuit the experienced prospector, hunter, miner or lumberman leaves in the bottom of the little wooden pail used to mix his dough, a small portion of the last mixing to serve as a leaven for the new batch—hence “sour-dough” is the equivalent of old-timer, veteran, etc.

TUMP-STRAP: A long wide strap to which the pack or bundle is fastened and which sustains its load by being passed around the forehead of the carrier who, when weary, sometimes shortens the strap and lets it drop across his (or her) breast. The use of a “tump-strap” leaves both hands free, which in rough country or thick woodlands is a distinct advantage.

